



Childhood Connections

June 4, 2025

Spotlight on Office of Childhood Teams!

Throughout 2025, this newsletter will spotlight team members who work in the Office of Childhood (OOC) and their “why” for supporting children, families, and the professionals who work directly with them.



Caron Ahlemeyer is a Program Manager of the Child Care Compliance section. In this role, she leads teams within four regional offices (Macon, Columbia, Chesterfield, and Cape Girardeau). The team licenses and regulates child care programs to ensure the health and safety of children within these settings. Caron is proud to have been working with the State of Missouri with child care compliance since 2007. She is committed to promoting positive child care environments that support both children and families.

Kayla Todaro is a Program Manager of the Child Care Compliance section. In this role, she leads teams within three regional offices (Raytown, Springfield, and Jefferson City), as well as the subsidy monitoring inspectors across the state. The team licenses and regulates child care programs to ensure the health and safety of children within these settings. Kayla has been dedicated to child welfare since 2008 when she began her career as a caregiver at a crisis nursery in Springfield, Mo. After graduating college, she worked at the Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline for 6 years before moving to child care compliance where she has



been ever since. Her motivation is to ensure children are well cared for in settings outside of the home so parents can participate in the workforce.



Kayla's Team: Sharlene Wheatley (Jefferson City Region Supervisor), Crystal Heiser (Raytown Region Supervisor), Romena Fox (West-side Complaint Team Supervisor), Melissa Holman (Subsidy Monitoring Supervisor), Sundee Bumgarner-Neff (Springfield Region Supervisor)



Caron's Team: Marla Chrisco (East-side Complaint Team Supervisor), Denise Koch (St. Louis Region Supervisor), Nancy Smith (St. Louis Region Supervisor), Christina Bruce (Columbia and Macon Region Supervisor), not pictured, Missy Smith (Cape Girardeau Region and Initial Team Supervisor).

ANNOUNCEMENT! Child Care Licensing Rule Revision Survey



In support of Executive Order 25-15 issued by Governor Kehoe, the Office of Childhood (OOC) has the opportunity to update child care licensing rules. OOC is currently conducting a survey to gather actionable feedback on rules that impact day-to-day operations in licensed child care settings.

- The survey is available to licensed child care providers, child care staff members, parents, child advocacy organizations, legislators, and any other stakeholders.
- The survey is open from May 19 - June 20, 2025.
- The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.
- [The survey can be accessed using this link.](#)

Learn more about the OOC's plan for addressing requirements of Executive Order 25-15 regarding revisions to child care licensing rules by visiting the [Child Care Licensing Rule Revision \(Executive Order 25-15\) webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT! MOQPK Grant Opportunity

Missouri Quality Prekindergarten (MOQPK) Grants are available for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and eligible child care programs. MOQPK grant recipients must meet the quality standards in statute (161.213 RSMo) and rule (5 CSR 25 100-340).

- Grant recipients must serve children in the year prior to kindergarten (age 4 by July 31, 2025).
- Classrooms must include children who are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Classrooms must be operating by September 2, 2025.
- Learn more about the grant on the [MOQPK website](#).
 - School districts and charter schools look under "Grant Information for LEAs 2025-26 Academic Year".
 - Child Care programs look under "Grant Information for Child Care 2025-26 Academic Year".
- Deadline to apply is June 27, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.

For questions, contact the Office of Childhood at Preschool@dese.mo.gov or call 573-751-6793.

NEW! Virtual Lunch and Learn on Child Trafficking

The Office of Disaster Services, with Kim Davis of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, will host the virtual lunch and learn "Child Trafficking: Beyond Awareness" on June 24, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to noon.

[Register for the lunch and learn online](#) and view the [Child Trafficking Flyer](#) for more information.

RESOURCE! Measles Guidance

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has released a [guidance document for child care providers on measles](#). This four-page document covers general measles information, prevention and preparation tips, and guidance on if a child care provider had a person with measles attend.

Reminder, always report suspected measles cases to the local health department.

TRAINING! Home Visiting Professional Development Resource

[The Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals](#) ("The Institute") offers early childhood professionals the opportunity to learn new

NEW! Additional Funding for CCHC Program CPR/First Aid Trainings for Child Care Providers

The Office of Childhood's Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) Program has recently received additional funding for the facilitation of CPR/First Aid trainings for child care providers to receive CPR/First Aid certifications at no cost to the child care provider.

To find out additional information about CPR/First Aid trainings for child care providers, reach out to the Local Public Health Department or check the contact information for Local Public Health Departments providing CPR/First Aid trainings. [Child Care Health Consultation \(CCHC\) Program Local Public Health Agency Coverage Map](#) shows trainings nearby.

To find out additional information about CPR/First Aid trainings for child care providers in your area, reach out to your Local Public Health Department or check the contact information for Local Public Health Departments providing CPR/First Aid trainings. [Child Care Health Consultation \(CCHC\) Program Local Public Health Agency Coverage Map](#) shows trainings in your area.

RESOURCE! First Steps Brochure

First Steps makes copies of their general informing brochures ([English Brochure](#) and [Spanish Brochure](#)) available for distribution on request! These informative brochures are designed to help families with children who may be eligible for early intervention services. The First Steps program provides essential support to children from birth to age 3 who have developmental delays or disabilities.

These brochures can help raise awareness and ensure that families have access to the resources they need to support their child's growth and development. We encourage child care providers, early learning programs, health care providers, and [other primary referral sources](#) to help spread the word about the importance of early intervention.

To obtain copies of the First Steps brochure, please email EarlyIntervention@dese.mo.gov.

skills and grow their careers through a wide library of engaging online modules. The Institute also can offer the ability to develop a personalized professional development plan.

ANNOUNCEMENT! Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement for 50 Home Visitors

Home Visiting professionals who work with pregnant people, infants, and young children and their families are now able to achieve an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement (IECMH-E) through the Missouri Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (MOAIMH-EC). The first 50 home visitors or supervisors that qualify can receive the endorsement for free!

[More information can be found in this Home Visiting Message.](#)

NEW! Bilingual Services Available for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is expanding its Bilingual Book Collection to Missouri starting June 2025. Existing families will receive an email allowing them to switch to the new Bilingual

REMINDER! Vendors Register with MissouriBuys

The Office of Administration is requiring all vendors (including child care providers contracted to receive subsidy) to register in the new “MissouriBuys powered by MOVERS” system. This registration must be completed and approved no later than **June 30, 2025**. Office of Childhood has been receiving questions about this requirement and has created a [new document to explain how to register](#).

- Be sure to follow the appropriate steps on this document based on whether you are a **new** subsidy provider or **existing** subsidy provider, as there is an additional step needed for **new** subsidy providers.
- You will receive a Supplier ID number after completing the MissouriBuys powered by MOVERS registration. This Supplier ID number does **not** need to be entered in CCDS.
- If you have already registered or are in the process of registering for MissouriBuys powered by MOVERS, please make sure to add your W9 and your banking information so your payments are not held up in the payment system.

English/Spanish Book Collection if they choose. New families will be able to select which book collection they prefer when enrolling:

- **English** – Mostly English books with an occasional bilingual English/Spanish book
- **Bilingual English/Spanish** – All (100%) bilingual English/Spanish books

Learn about Imagination Library enrollment in your area by [visiting our Imagination Library webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT! Conference on the Young Years Call for Presentation Proposals



The Office of Childhood is accepting presentation proposals for the Conference on the Young Years (CYY) 2026. The conference dates are March 5-7, 2026, at Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, MO. Our goal is to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss appropriate practices, share ideas, and receive developmental information on early childhood (birth-3rd grade).

All sessions should be one hour in length. If selected, the presenter receives complimentary registration. All other costs, including lodging, will be at the presenter's expense.

Please note that selling or promoting materials during the presentation is strictly prohibited. Presenters may rent a booth space in the exhibit hall for this purpose.

The link for the 2026 Presentation Proposal is available on the [CYY website](#). The deadline to submit a proposal is July 1, 2025. Completed proposal(s) must be submitted via Wufoo.

Monthly MOPD Quick Tip

The MOPD system tracks employment for individuals, therefore each professional will have one MOPD ID that remains with them throughout their career. If you are moving from one employer to another, be sure to end date the old employer and create a new employment record with the new employer.

Individuals should only have one active role per employer, so select the role that best fits your work. If you are actively working in more than one program, you may have more than one facility as your employer and can select the role that is best for each employer.

See [full instructions at the Missouri Professional Development System webpage](#) or email MOPD@dese.mo.gov with questions.

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.

This month's Spotlight comes from Amy R. Weinstein, who would like to share the impact the First Steps program had on her early life.



"I had recently turned two years old when my first (Individualized Family Service Plan) IFSP was written in 1995. There were concerns with seizure activity, and my MRI displayed an 8-millimeter ganglioglioma temporal lobe tumor on my front left temporal lobe. I qualified for Missouri First Steps under a delay in communication and Encephalopathy, which means there is a disorder in my brain. I shoved everything in my mouth that was nonedible such as crayons, cotton balls, and even dog food. Eventually, I had surgery to remove my brain tumor at St. Louis Children's Hospital from a neurosurgeon named Dr. Tae Sung Park. After my surgery, I stood up, walked around inside my crib, and sang a song called Mama Paquita. My father picked me up, and shared that my dark clouds had gone away, and my sunshine had come out to shine. While in

First Steps, I had Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and a Nutritionist. Once I realized how to use my voice, I ran away from my mom on outings, introduced myself to every stranger I could find, told them that my favorite color was purple, and I never stopped singing.

In order for me to stay by my mom, she had me wear a backpack that had a leash attached. When I transitioned into Early Childhood Special Education, I got on that bus and never looked back. To this day, my mom would tell me that if it were not for my First Steps team, she would not have let me go as she was not ready for me to attend school all day. I had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) from the ages of three years old until I was 19 years old. I had accommodations throughout my nine years in college while earning an Associates, Bachelors, and Master's degree.

After that, I got married, and my husband and I have a 6-year-old mini labradoodle named Rex. My purpose for why I am a Family Service Coordinator is to make a difference in the lives of families and young children. I do what I can to help families realize that just because their child has a diagnosis or a delay, that will never define who they are or what they can and cannot do. Providers within First Steps do whatever it takes to give families the tools they need to put into their imaginary toolbox to help families and children have the start in life to grow, change, develop, and learn. After I received Early Intervention Services within First Steps, I had experienced many hurdles and bumps along the way to get to where I am today.

Looking back, my mom told me that it was the Early Intervention I had within MO First Steps that helped me have a start at life. Today, I do what I can to remind families that they and their child's own sunshine will come out to shine. I also bring a professional notepad that my neurosurgeon gave me after I had reconnected with him. When I graduated college, he gave me a note pad that says "Dream, Believe and Never Give Up!" I remind families to do the same for themselves and their family like my First Steps team did for me."

Thank you, Amy, for sharing your amazing story and for all the incredible work you do for Missouri families!

OOO Monthly Stakeholder Webinar

A [recording](#) and [the PowerPoint slides](#) from the April 2025 webinar are available in case you were unable to attend and wish to hear the information.

For questions about the stakeholder webinar series, or suggestions for topics in future webinars, email us at Childhood@dese.mo.gov.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

[Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.](#)

disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.



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